

## NEWS

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### **ELMORE COUNTY MAN TESTS POSITIVE FOR WEST NILE VIRUS**

A 72-year-old Elmore County man has tested positive for West Nile virus, the second lab-confirmed human West Nile infection in 2006. The Glenns Ferry man was diagnosed with the most serious form of the disease that is affecting his brain and causing mental disorientation. He was to be released from a Boise hospital today (Monday July 17, 2006) and transferred to a local rehabilitation center.

Six Idaho counties have reported West Nile Virus activity this year. Three Elmore County birds have tested positive for West Nile Virus, and the first human case came out of Owyhee County, just across the Snake River from Elmore County. The other counties reporting West Nile activity include Ada, Canyon, Gem and Gooding counties. Last year, West Nile virus was discovered in 15 southern Idaho counties, infecting 13 people, over 100 horses and a dozen birds.

West Nile virus is usually spread through the bite of an infected mosquito and is not generally spread from person-to-person or from infected animals to people. Across the nation to date, 24 other states have reported West Nile activity to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, with three of those states recording human infections.

About 80 percent of people who are bitten by an infected mosquito will not become sick, but others may experience a mild, flu-like illness that can include headaches, body

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## **West Nile Human Case – Add One**

aches and a fever. In rare cases, the virus can lead to serious illness, especially in people over the age of 50. If you are ill and think you may have been exposed to mosquitoes carrying the West Nile Virus, report it to your physician who may order blood tests to confirm the presence of the virus.

To protect yourself and your family from mosquito bites, and the potential of exposure to West Nile Virus, you should:

- Insect-proof your home by repairing or replacing screens;
- Reduce standing water on your property that provides mosquito breeding habitat, such as bird baths and decorative ponds;
- Cover up exposed skin when outdoors;
- Apply insect repellent approved by the Environmental Protection Agency to exposed skin and clothing. Follow instructions on the product label, especially for children;
- Avoid mosquitoes when they are most active at dawn and dusk; and
- Report dead birds to your local Fish and Game office.

West Nile virus does not appear to affect most animals including dogs and cats, but can cause severe illness in horses and certain species of birds. Although there is not a vaccine available for people, there are several vaccines for horses. Approximately one-third of horses that contract West Nile virus will die, so horse owners are encouraged to contact their veterinarian about vaccinating their animals. Horse owners who suspect West Nile viral infection in their animal should contact their veterinarian immediately.

Additional information about the virus is available from the Central District Health Department website at [www.cdhd.idaho.gov](http://www.cdhd.idaho.gov).

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